



Thaddeus Leon Klimczak

November 8, 1942 - August 19, 2026

Erie, Pennsylvania

Thaddeus Leon Klimczak died in Erie on August 19, 2026. He was eighty-three. Born there on November 8, 1942, he learned the lake before he learned a trade. His father worked the ore docks. Thaddeus worked them too, then the grain elevators, then whatever job would keep a man outdoors in a city that does not flatter anyone who waits for mild weather.

He shipped as a young deckhand on a laker when the season still felt like a second country: long water, short nights, and a paycheck that arrived smelling of rust. Later he stayed ashore and spent decades moving ore, checking hatches, and teaching younger men that ice on a ladder is not a story you tell afterward if you have been careful. He did not romanticize the work. He said the lake was beautiful from a hill and dangerous from a deck, and that both facts could be true before breakfast.

He married Elaine Klimczak in 1964. They kept a house up the hill from the bayfront and a cabin they almost never finished painting. Two sons grew up knowing how to bait a hook and how to be quiet in a boat. Elaine taught school. Thaddeus packed her lunches with the same seriousness he packed a toolbox. After he retired he walked the bayfront in every month except the ones when the wind made walking a kind of argument.

Friends remember a dry laugh, a refusal to own more than one good coat, and a habit of showing up to help move a freezer as if that were the natural use of a Saturday. He could name the boats of his youth and would stop himself before the list became a lecture. He died in the city whose ore and weather had written his calendar. The dock still works. He would have liked that the work outlasted the man.

Services

Visitation in Erie, followed by a simple service. A walk along the bay afterward, weather allowing.

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